



pray

HOW TO TALK TO GOD

LESSON 11 // HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR FUTURE—PART 2

The Bible gives us many examples of how God impacts the future in response to prayer. The Old Testament tells us about a man named Jabez who experienced this in his life.

1 Chronicles 4:9, 10 (NIV) *Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, “I gave birth to him in pain.”¹⁰ Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request.*

Jabez had an ugly past and a big problem. The fact that his mother named him Jabez (which means “pain” in Hebrew) indicates something of her issue with him. Also, Jabez’s brothers were apparently less honorable than he was, so there certainly was some pain in his family life. It seems that Jabez lived in a painful or cursed environment.

In the midst of this big problem, Jabez made a big decision to pray boldly. He didn’t let the challenges of his life keep him from praying for God to change his life and his future. He decided that enough was enough!

In the last lesson, we looked at two things Jabez did that we must do to make a DATE for a better future: (1) Decide to be done with the things that are diminishing and destroying your life; and (2) be prepared to honestly Admit the things God wants addressed in your life. From Jabez’s example, let’s look at two more things we must do:

1. T = Tell God and others what you’re targeting for transformation.

Jabez translated what he knew were the most strategic problems in his life and turned his problems to prayer. He told God about them and asked the Lord to help him.

Jabez not only told God, he also told someone else—that’s how his prayer ended up in the Bible! This is the scariest part for most people, but it’s also one of the most powerful parts. Having someone stand with you in your battle is a great blessing and brings greater strength to overcome your challenges. Notice what the Bible says about this:

Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NIV) *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work.*

Matthew 18:19, 20 (NIV) *Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.²⁰ For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*

James 5:16 (NIV) *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

2. E = Expect something wonderful to happen.

Jabez prayed because he believed there was a God in heaven who:

- Cared about him.
- Cared about the issues that were diminishing and destroying his life.
- Had the power to help him break these curses and overcome these issues.
- Was willing to intervene—to answer the prayer of an obscure, hurting man.

Jabez expected an answer! He expected the Lord to help him—and God didn't disappoint.

God will do the same for you. Jesus wants you to have “abundant life”—not just “life” but “life to the full.”

John 10:10 (NIV) *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

What should be your response? Expect God to intervene and break your curses, free you from smallness, powerlessness and pain, and give you a better future.

Mark 11:22 (NIV) *“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered.*

Philippians 4:6, 7 (NIV) *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

1 John 5:14, 15 (NIV) *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.*

What God did for Jabez, He will do for you! Make the same decision Jabez made. Let your desperation drive you to God. He is the One who will reverse your curse and change your future.

Discussion questions

1. Why is it important to turn your problems into prayer? What happens if you don't do this?
2. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9, Matthew 18:19, 20 and James 5:16. How do these verses encourage you to tell others about your spiritual battles?
3. Read Mark 11:22, Philippians 4:6, 7 and 1 John 5:14, 15. Based on these verses, what should you expect from God when you pray in faith? In what ways can this make a difference in your times of prayer with the Lord?